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GARDEN NOTES

NUMBER 25



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I took advantage of my winter vacation, which I spent in North Africa and Italy, to visit the Iris growers of both England and France. As my ship from New York landed at Plymouth, England, which is within two hours ride of Morwellham, the home of Mr. Bliss, I naturally paid him the first visit. Mr Bliss' work in the origination of Dominion, and its famous progeny, Cardinal, Swazi, Bruno, and Duke of Bedford, brought him into the very front rank of Iris hybridizers, and his later varieties, Citronella, Susan Bliss, Auburn, Romola, Pioneer, Evadne, Mystic and Majestic, have added to his fame. I gathered from his conversation that he considers Mrs. Valerie West and Grace Sturtevant to be the best of his later introductions, but he told me that the last named variety increases very slowly, and he showed me a small clump which he told me was his entire stock of it.

We all know that Irises usually branch in two directions only, but he showed me the stem on a plant of one of his new seedlings which has branches on four sides. Judging by the stem, which in February was still attached to the plant, it is a tall, sturdy variety, and I am told that the flower is of much more than ordinary quality. If any of my readers visit England during the blooming season, I hope that, although Mr. Bliss' garden is five or six hours by train from London, they will be interested enough to go to Morwellham to see this particular variety when

it is in bloom, and, of course, at the same time see his other seedlings. His garden is apparently much larger than when I visited it five years ago, but he told me that a part of the time he previously gave to Irises is now being devoted to Glads and Daffodils.

I am sure that all growers will be interested in knowing that Katherine Dykes, widow of W. R. Dykes, has decided to continue her husband's garden, and is issuing a catalog for the sale of plants. She tells me that, although she is not ambitious to do a large business and has not yet solicited American orders, she will, if it is wanted, issue a typewritten price list for American growers. She naturally does not wish to open accounts in distant America, but she told me that she was considering the idea of paying the parcel post charges on her shipments to Americans in return for having the cash in advance.

She has growing in her garden a fine clump of Iris, W. R. Dykes, the extra large yellow variety named in her husband's honor, and every American Iris enthusiast who visits England in the blooming season will wish to see it. The visitor must take a train from the Victoria station in London for the station at Woking, where he will undoubtedly find a taxi to take him to the garden, which is possibly a mile or more distant. As Mrs. Dykes' telephone number is in the London directory, all intending visitors will, naturally, first ask permission to see her garden, and from its appearance in February and in April I am sure that the June visitors will be amply repaid for the time spent in visiting it. She has a nice stock of Aphrodite, Amber, Peerless, Moonlight, Wedgewood, Harmony, Lustre, and the other varieties which have made her husband's name famous wherever Irises are appreciated. She has, I believe, the best gardener in her employ that I met either in England or France, and her garden is a model in neatness. I sincerely wish that I might have the opportunity of seeing it in

June when the new Iris, W. R. Dykes, and all the rest of them are in bloom. Growers who wish to obtain her typewritten price list should address their letters to Mrs. Dykes, Bobbingcourt, Pyle Hill, Mayford, Woking, Surrey, England.

I hurried through England and France on my way to North Africa, and after a few weeks spent in Tunis and Algiers and others spent in Italy and Sicily I returned to France and England. In this return trip I visited Mr. Millet and Mr. Cayeux in France, and Mr. Perry, Mr. Murrell, and Mr. Wallace in England.

It is always a great pleasure for me to have a visit with Mr. Millet at his home in Bourg-la-Reine near Paris. He speaks perfect English, and I feel quite sure that he will make all American Iris growers as welcome as he has always made me. The English growers agree with the American Iris enthusiasts that his Souv. de Madame Gaudichau is one of the very great Irises of the world, and if the Nurserymen and "Catalog" Seed Houses of the United States decide to sell Irises, as I believe many of them will in the next five years, then this great Iris of Mr. Millet's, with Iris Ambassadeur from Vilmorin's, will undoubtedly be among the safest ones for them to purchase. His very new variety, Germaine Perthuis, which, of course, is still scarce and high priced, is even better. Mr. Millet does not claim that it is a Dominion seedling, but as it bloomed last year it seemed to be the equal of any Dominion seedling I have ever seen. His Micheline Charraire (white) and Souv. de Loetitia Michaud (light blue) were the two largest and tallest Irises of their color I have ever seen, and in the seasons of 1925 and 1926 they were perfectly hardy in my garden. My English friends who reported on them gave their approval to all three of these new varieties, while Mr. Murrell, of England, and Mr. Cayeux, of France, were both especially

enthusiastic about Mr. Millet's Madame Cecile Bouscant, an extra large bloom with some lilac pink and some blue in its coloring. Iris enthusiasts should try to see all four of these new varieties, during the blooming season both in growers' gardens and at the shows of the American Iris Society.

Mr. Cayeux, of Cayeux and LeClerc, is probably the jolliest of the Iris growers of Europe. He and I are compelled to do our visiting through an interpreter, but I know of no one who is more sociable and friendly in his disposition. He shows his friendliness by telling us the crosses he has made to secure all his best Irises, and apparently he has no secrets to keep from any one. I believe his first great success was Ma Mie, which in its color and form is today probably excelled by Anna Farr only, and the French variety is the better grower of the two.

Belisaire, Imperator, Jean Chevreau, Le Grand Ferre, and Peau Rouge are doubtless better known than any of his other creations, but Madame Henri Cayeux and Renee Cayeux may possibly have equal or even greater merit. One of his very new varieties, Ophelia, delighted me very much in my own garden. Labor and Thais he believes to be the very best of his 1926 seedlings, and Mr. Murrell, of England, was particularly enthusiastic about Labor, so it undoubtedly is worthy of a trial in our American gardens.

Mr. Cayeux makes several hundred new crosses every year, so that his garden during the blooming season is one of the most interesting places in the world.

When I am in Paris I always try to have a nice visit with Mr. Emrich, who has charge of the Foreign business of Vilmorin Andrieux & Company. This firm made itself famous when it introduced Ambassadeur and Opera, two of the most satisfactory Irises in the world. Both these varieties have splendid quality and vigor, and they multiply rapidly. Ambassadeur is one of the tallest and largest

Irises in the world, with light violet and red purple colors, while Opera, though not as tall, or large, has such an abundance of bloom of bright red violet that it gives life and beauty to its section of the garden. Alcazar, Medrano, Isoline, Magnifica and Cluny are all splendid varieties from this firm. A new variety, Allies, of outstanding quality and rich red-brown, purple colors, has the unusual habit of blooming in the fall, and my one year's experience with it leads me to recommend it. My English friends tell me that two of the very new Irises in Vilmorin's garden, LeCorrege, and Fra Angelico, are also excellent varieties and I am hoping that my friend, Mr. Emerich, will allow American growers to import them this season so that next year we can tell the readers of our Garden Notes whether they have the same high quality we find in Ambassadeur and Opera.

In a future issue of my Garden Notes I want to tell you of my visits with Mr. Perry, Mr. Murrell, and Mr. Wallace, the three growers who have been furnishing me all of my newest Irises from England.

But I want to devote the rest of my space in these Garden Notes to tell you that we can make just as successful Iris pilgrimages in America, as in Europe. Mr. Wassenberg and I are, fortunately, located within a two-hour drive of Mr. Williamson's garden in Bluffton, Indiana, and every season we make at least one, and often many trips to see his new seedlings when they are in bloom. I fear that American growers do not know the opportunities they are missing by not seeing his annual group of new seedlings, for in the number of new and individual specimens, his garden excels any I have visited in Europe.

Many years ago Mr. Williamson raised thousands of seedlings of Oncocyclus, Regelia, and Pogoniris parentage. A few of these were named (Cherokee Maid, Maude Tribolet, John W. Tribolet), but as he found these

hybrids unsuited to his climate he discontinued this line of breeding and has given all his attention in recent years to crosses within the subgenus *Pogoniris*. His *Lent A. Williamson* has been voted by the American Iris Society as the best Iris originated in America. His *George J. Tribolet* as shown in colors in his new catalogue will eventually rank with *Lent A. Williamson*. But I am pleased with his splendid extra large new variety, *Dolly Madison*, for I believe it is not only his greatest introduction but that on account of its size and beauty it will eventually rank as one of the five or six greatest Irises in the world. While it is not yet in my own garden, as it has been very recently introduced, I hope to be able to show it to visitors next year, growing with *Frieda Mohr* and *William Mohr*, two of the most excellent varieties produced in Professor Mitchell's garden in California. I wish I had space in this issue of Garden Notes to tell you of my visit to Professor Mitchell's garden and also to Miss Sturtevant's garden, but I must reserve the story of these delightful visits for a future issue.

The great object in publishing these Notes is to help build up a reliable demand for the best Irises in the world, and allow the poor ones to drop into the discard. The American Iris Society has done good work in publishing a Black List, and I am sometimes tempted to publish a list of those varieties which I believe will eventually reach that destination, for the sooner we find out that a variety should be discarded, the more money we have left with which to purchase those varieties which have great merit.



